

PROFILE

A Family Business in the Motor City

Integrity Lift provides material handling solutions through communication, execution and Integrity.

BY STEVE GUGLIELMO

The summer of 2009 in Detroit, Michigan, was hardly the ideal economic climate for a startup company, especially a startup in the material handling industry. Detroit was one of the most heavily impacted cities by the Great Recession. However, for Jeff and Susan Carnahan, it proved to be the perfect moment to strike out on their own and fill a niche that the city was sorely missing. And so, on June 1, 2009, Integrity Lift Services was born.

Integrity had very humble beginnings, starting with only four employees, Jeff and Susan (CEO and Owner) and two technicians, in a small building in Livonia, Michigan.

“We were just the little engine that could,” says Jeff. “That’s what I always

call us. Our thought was that if we could make it then, in 2009 and 2010 in this industry and this economy, it would get better and easier and it did.”

Over the next 9 years that little engine that could thought they could and thought they could and eventually

chugged their way to a turnkey forklift dealership that has grown from 4 employees to 48 today. However, while the company has increased its employee base by 10 fold, as well as its product catalog, they still operate with the same core values as the day it was founded.

Beginning their company in one of the hardest hit cities at the height of the Recession, while difficult at the start, has also proven to be beneficial for the dealership in the long run.

“I always hear the older generation talk about the Depression,” says Jeff. “People that came through it learned to value all of the money they had and never take it for granted. That’s what we have learned too. Still today, we’ll look back and say we’ve got to be careful, watch our blindside and watch the economy. We’ve always got to be prepared because things can happen in the blink of an eye. We saw it from October 2008 to June 2009. Things changed so quickly and you can only get small so fast. We don’t stay small for that reason, but we’re still very conservative because of that era.”

The fact that the company weathered the storm of the Recession has ensured that when Integrity does opt to scale up, it’s always carefully considered and strategically planned and executed.

Becoming a One Stop Shop

The company’s evolution from four employees to turnkey dealer didn’t happen overnight. It has happened in stages and has grown out of necessity.

